
TRANSLATING LITERATURES, TRANSLATING CULTURES. Mueller-Vollmer, K. and M. Irmischer. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. 214 pp.

Translating Literatures, Translating Cultures: New Vistas and Approaches in Literary Studies is a collection of essays by eleven notable contributors, originating from their presentations given at an international conference at Stanford University on March 17-18, 1995. The publication serves to inform the academic community about the new European programs on translation studies, particularly the "Center for Advanced Studies in Literary Translation" at the University of Gottingen, which serves as a model for other worldwide prospective centers and programs. The editors, Kurt Mueller-Vollmer and Michael Irmischer, carefully organized the articles into three categories, including, Translation Studies as Cultural History and Criticism, Translating German Philosophy and Literature to the American Context, and Translating Prose, Poetry and Drama. The collection contains

common themes that are consistently interwoven so that it maintains both a sense of unity and overall purpose. In the introduction, the editors address the problem that "Although translation has always been a principal agent in the evolution of literate cultures, it has been accorded only scant and sporadic attention within the established academic disciplines". Will these innovative European centers, in fact, prove to be a breakthrough for other worldwide translation studies?

Professor Armin Paul Frank, of the University at Gottingen explains the impact of translation on world literature, culture and understanding in his article. The centers in Tel Aviv, Leuven, and Gottingen cover new, in-depth approaches in both translation and literary studies. "Weltliteratur", that is world literature, encompasses the idea of how translations provide a literary, transnational trade. To put it another way, literature that is never translated is incomplete, because it can only be enjoyed monolingually and cannot be within the realm of world literature. Pieces of literature and translation cannot be thought of as

entirely independent, because they rely on outside influences, such as a cultural transfer and preceding works. In other words, says Frank, "Every work...is a choir, so to speak, of all the voices, fragmentary or continuous, dissimulated and undisguised from past or contemporaneous writings". Cultural transference is tied to philology, the study of a culture through its language and literature, which also explains their interconnection. Professor Rainer Schulte, from the University of Texas at Dallas, shares many of Frank's views and adds a number of other interesting points, including the idea that interpretation means interaction, dialogue and communication with the text, which are all aspects a translation must encompass. This resembles Octavio Paz's translation philosophy: "When we interpret a text, especially one from a previous century, we must translate that text into our own sensibility of the twentieth century"; that is, a translator must make sense of a text's foreignness in order to enter him/herself into it. Translation is a complex process, which consists of the linking of words together, with their signposts and underlying

situations. Schulte believes that translation criticism must be expanded as a literary field, which graduate students could be encouraged to investigate for their master's theses or Ph.D. dissertations and which all literature and humanities programs might include as part of their curriculum. The purpose would not be to create more professional literary translators, but to understand the important role translation as a whole plays in the vast academic realm.

The second category of contributors mainly explores the influence of German philosophy and literature on the American context. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, the co-editor and a professor at Stanford University, focuses on the predominantly German influence on the mid-nineteenth century movement known as New England transcendentalism. Emerson's book, *Nature* from 1836, exhibits a similar Romantic discourse and vocabulary to a German predecessor, Schleiermacher's *Discourses*, from 1799, despite its completely distinct linguistic and cultural background. New England transcendentalism was considered to be a major breakthrough in literary history and was distinguished for its Americanness, yet so much of it had

been influenced by European, particularly German, literature. According to Mueller-Vollmer, had it not been for Emerson's European predecessors, it's possible that he would have produced works of a different and even inferior quality. Ernest Behler, a professor from the University of Washington, includes in his article a detailed analysis of the project, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, which is the first complete translation of Nietzsche's works. All texts will be newly translated in order to have consistent terminology and annotations throughout the volumes; in turn, this will affect the academic realm in its global entirety, because Nietzsche greatly shaped world philosophy, literature, and theology.

The collection's third category is especially noted for John Felstiner's brief but very thoughtful contribution on the influential German writer Paul Celan, born of a Jewish family in Romania. Felstiner, who is a professor at Stanford University, explores how Celan's translated works helped to introduce British, American, French, and Russian culture to Post War Germany. Due to Celan's personal tragedies, which included being a forced

slave laborer in the Czernowitz ghetto and losing both of his parents to concentration camps, he was drawn to Renaissance themes, particularly those of Shakespeare, which included love and loss, time's ravages, and regeneration. His difficult past also allowed him to identify himself with the Russian poet, Osip Mandelshtam, who had faced similar calamities in life. Through his translation of Mandelshtam's works he let his own personal, empathetic voice enter, and gave recognition to a once alien Russian poet. Felstiner also supports the metaphor of translation as cultural transference, because he sees it as a kind of ferrying, an act of being carried across. Helga Essman, a professor at the University of Gottingen, also made a somewhat valuable contribution with her research on the great number of literary translation anthologies that have been published in German. With the anthologies' multilateral and multilingual inclusions, Germans are provided with a richer understanding of foreign languages and cultures. Her hope is that not only German, but all translation anthologies, will become a new field of research that receives a great deal of attention in the near future.

This publication serves as a valuable source in the field of literary and translation studies. It represents a unified and organized collection of essays that supplement each other with specific analyses on a vast range of related topics. For the most part, the contributors make interesting and important points, yet some choose to explain themselves in a more convoluted, dry fashion. I commend Rainer Schulte, who conveys his ideas on translation in an extremely clear and interesting manner, and who also brings in multiple scholars' analyses and examples.

Other contributors, who also provide important analysis in this

volume, are Harald Kittel, Liselotte Gumpel, Cyrus Hamlin, Brigette Schultze and Thomas Freeland. This collection of essays serves the academic community as a whole, but is most suited for a target audience of professors, scholars, translators, and graduate students. It makes a very important point as to how literary and translation studies should be a more recognized, integral aspect of all academic centers and programs, modeled after the center at the University of Gottingen. For without translation, there would be no concept of world literature, but only a narrow spectrum of each country's monolingual and monocultural texts.

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